

Trait Specific Comments

The only way to raise the quality of writing in a school district is to create, share, and celebrate specific criteria for that quality (trait) with everybody on a regular basis (227).

-Barry Lane-

- Trait-specific feedback can produce valuable revision ideas for students, as well as help students grow their understanding of the trait in focus. Once students realize your feedback is going to be on their paper, they begin enjoying the revision process a bit more (anticipating what you're going to say) ...remember to keep it brief and balanced by commenting on:
 - 2 grows (specific to the trait/s in focus)
 - 1 glow (a positive in any trait)
- Critical next steps: students should revisit the paper & revise based on the teachers feedback.

Attached you will find some trait specific comments that *may assist* you in this process. These stems are meant to plant seeds for a reader...not an end within themselves. Keep in mind, the best comments, come from questions and ideas generated while reading!

IDEA STEMS

The natural questions you have as a reader show where there are gaps in idea development or more details/examples are necessary!

ORGANIZATION STEMS

Lead Sentence

If strong

- Good/Great/Awesome hook!
- I want to read on!
- Catchy opening!

If weak

- Opening sentence should grab the reader's attention. Try coming up with one or two different leads. Ask a friend which one they like best.
- It is not necessary to introduce yourself to the reader before starting.
- The lead sentence should pull the reader in. Perhaps revising and playing with your opening sentence could add some suspense or hook for the reader.
- Can you think of another lead sentence to pull the reader in?
- Can you think of another way to begin your story? Ask a question, use a quote, describe the setting, use a noise, or even exaggeration.

Conclusion

If strong

- Nice job tying everything together!
- Your ending is very moving. It sends a powerful message to the reader.
- Your ending sends a clear message to the reader.
- Wow! Your conclusion really makes me think!
- Hmm...something for me to think about!
- Nice thought to leave the reader with!

If weak

- The ending is a great place to encourage the reader to think how this topic relates to their own life.
- It is important to end with a powerful message to the reader.
- As a reader, I don't feel there is closure. Can you think of something to add to help remind the reader of the purpose of this writing?
- The conclusion is an excellent place to remind the reader just how important/special...
- Your story just ends, leaving the reader hanging. Please go back and revise the ending so the reader feels
- Your story ends suddenly. Perhaps revisit this to see if you can add some more details. Some ideas: tell how you felt about the event, tell what you learned/accomplished, circle back to the hook, make a comparison or come up with a surprise ending.

ORGANIZATION STEMS

Transitions

If strong

- Great job moving onto a new thought.
- Nice flow between paragraphs.
- Strong word choice for your transitions.
- Your paper flows smoothly from one idea to the next.
- A very thoughtful, strong transition.

If weak

- Can you think of a word that would help the reader move on to your next thought in a very natural way?
- Can you think of some transition words to help these different sections flow together? (*I have a sheet of transition words I will give you).
- What word would allow you to skip ahead in time to move the piece along? Ideas: The next day, Later that night, In the morning, Finally, Meanwhile, At that point, At last, Soon, Immediately, In the end, Afterward, In the meantime, etc.
- You used transitions, but they seem a bit predictable. Can you go back and brainstorm other possibilities?

Sequencing

If strong

- The order of your story works well with the topic and purpose.
- The structure and sequence of the text guides the reader through your piece smoothly.
- The turning point in your story really stands out!
- Clever sequencing! I like how this was slowly revealed to the reader.

If weak

- Perhaps mentioning *this* sooner would help guide the reader so they can better understand your focus and purpose.
- Does the order of your text highlight your main idea in the best way possible?
- This paragraph may fit better elsewhere. What do you think?
- This description may fit better somewhere else. What do you think?
- Maybe this would fit better somewhere else. What do you think?
- Perhaps rearranging the text would make your idea more clear?
- I think you talked about this earlier. Do you think this text would work better there?

VOICE STEMS

If strong

- I couldn't put this story down!
- As a reader, you emotionally hooked me!
- You really brought this theme/topic to light...it left me thinking about what you said.
- I had to share your story with others.
- I can "hear" you saying this!
- I can "hear" a person doing/saying this (indicate) in this situation.
- Good use of dialect/dialogue to make the story believable and interesting.
- I was engaged through the entire piece. You really expressed yourself well.
- Your personality really comes out in this piece.
- Your strong word choice helped create great voice.
- I can feel how committed you are to this story/topic. It's exciting to read something that you clearly care about. Your voice brings the topic to life.
- You have a very unique style (indicate) that engages the reader.
- Your voice matched perfectly to the purpose and audience of your piece.
- You selected the right tone for this story/topic.
- The emotion in this story rings true. The voice is personal and engaging. Way to go.

If developing

- Think of your audience. Who are they? Write *right to them*.
- I'm sure there are things you could tell me about this story to make it unique and allow me to see it through your eyes. Adding that information will help make the voice in your paper come alive.
- Your voice is good here (indicate) but fades in other places (indicate).
- A few more details and interesting words in the right places would strengthen the voice in this piece.
- Your writing communicates a sincere message, but done in a safe, general manner.
- To make your voice stronger, look for places where you have hidden behind obvious statements. Come up with a clearer way to say things and use your own examples.
- Do you remember enough about this experience to write about it? To pull the reader in, you need intriguing details throughout for an

If weak

- It comes across as though you are bored or do not care about this story/topic. If you don't care, neither will your reader. Write as if this were the most interesting story/topic in the universe!
- Knowledge puts confidence into your voice. Add some intriguing details or facts in your piece.
- Imagine you are writing a letter, even when you're not. You'll be surprised how your voice becomes more poetic.
- Have you considered the tone you are trying to create (happy, dark, humorous, etc.)?
- Be yourself. This does not "sound" like you. Let your quirky (use appropriate adjective to match child's personality) style come out in your writing.
- The tone of your piece does not match the intended audience.

VOICE STEMS

If weak

- Different audiences require a different kind of voice. Read this piece aloud and see what you think?
- Figure out the most important part in this piece and add energy and punch with a specific example or detail; that will create voice.
- You've played it very safe here. I'm excited to read your next draft where you show how you really felt and what you were thinking. This will add a lot of voice to your piece.
- Remember, the reader may not always know the same words as you do. Use words and phrases that make it easy for the reader to feel how much this topic means to you and why. This will establish your voice.
- I'm not sure how you felt about this experience. Did you like it? Dislike it? Think it was fun?

WORD CHOICE STEMS

If strong

- Precise, powerful word choice right (indicate) here!
- Lots of striking phrases and words (indicate) that lingered in my mind.
- Your words are specific and accurate, making it easy to understand the message.
- Your careful word selection really brings this piece to life.
- Strong verbs!!!
- Your word choice made this story very memorable.
- Nice precise nouns (indicate) and lively verbs (indicate)!
- This piece is filled with specificity and a generous sprinkling of active verbs.
- Thank you for choosing words with such care. They are accurate and specific.
- You have some words in this piece that really catch my attention, such as _____ and _____. They helped me see what you were writing about very clearly.
- You've spent time thinking about which words to use to make the meaning clear. Thank you.
- I like how you put these words together (indicate). The way you phrased your thoughts on this topic shows strength in word choice.
- Your words are just right in this piece. I especially like _____ and _____.
- Inventive and risky- thanks for making me pay attention to your words.
- I can picture this! Really drew a picture in my mind.
- _____-what a perfect word for this image!

If developing

- The words in your piece make sense, but they don't have much energy or punch. Can you go back and revise some of the generalities to make them more specific and interesting?
- Your verbs lack power. Try revising them to strengthen your paper in word choice.
- You have a few moments of imprecise or incorrectly used language (indicate) that create confusion for the reader, but you also have a few gems (indicate)!
- Thank you for trying some new words. However, several of these words don't fit, such as _____ and _____. Try to find more accurate words to use here.
- You use your words correctly, but they lack specificity. Try making some of your general nouns like _____, more specific.
- Your message is coming across. Just a few clichés (indicate) and over-written phrases (indicate).
- Words are adequate and correct in a general sense, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way.
- The words and phrases are functional with a few successes (indicate).
- Making your passive verbs active will really strengthen this piece in word choice.

WORD CHOICE STEMS

If weak

- Can you think of a different way to say this using a couple of really wonderful words that make a picture in the reader's mind?
- Can you think of a way to revise this part (indicate) so you are expressing this idea without repeating the same words you used earlier?
- Remember to keep your audience in mind. They may not know what this (indicate) means, so you have to explain it with more details and/or examples or even different words.
- Too many adjectives and not enough strong verbs and interesting nouns.
- Good writing is memorable and creates a picture in the reader's head. To create this picture, use specific nouns. Then make these specific nouns move by selecting strong verbs.
- The message is unclear. Revise to find better words to send your message to the reader. Write from the heart and the words will come.
- The language of your story is very flat. Can you think of a way to spice it up in a few places?
- Be careful of thesaurus overload. Too many big words leaves the reader feeling lost and even confused.
- There is limited vocabulary and/or misused parts of speech (indicate). This makes your message and story blurry for the reader.

SENTENCE FLUENCY STEMS

{Sentence fluency is the auditory trait. Make sure you read the piece aloud to assess this trait!}

If strong

- Your writing here (indicate) is very poetic, lyrical, musical.
- Wow! Almost every sentence begins differently!
- Your sentence beginnings are very purposeful.
- Great job varying sentence structure (ie., intentional use of fragments works, simple, compound, and complex sentences)
- Thank you for using sentences of different lengths. This variety makes reading your piece a pleasure.
- It was a breeze to read this piece aloud. Your sentences work so well that I had no trouble hearing a natural and pleasing sound.
- You show strength in how to carefully construct sentences so they flow and maintain your message. Well done!
- I like the sound of this paper as I read it aloud- it has rhythm!
- You used lots of sentence types to make the ideas stand out clearly. Great work!
- Creative and appropriate connectives between sentences and thoughts. Naturally shows how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.

If developing

- Although I had to stop and reread part of the text, most sections were smooth and easy to read aloud.
- Your sentences don't always begin the same way, which is a positive. Going back and revising some of the repetitive beginnings would help to create better fluency.
- Right here (indicate) there are several choppy little sentences, one after another. Can you think of a way to revise these to get more variety in sentence length?
- Some of your sentence beginnings show great imagination (indicate), but others are repetitive and mechanical (indicate). To strengthen this piece for sentence fluency, please revise the repetitive and mechanical beginnings.
- A few awkward phrases with some repetitions and sentence variety. A few minor revisions would easily strengthen this piece for sentence fluency.
- Phrasing in a few places (indicate) does not sound natural.
- This piece reads more pleasant or businesslike than musical and more mechanical than fluid.
- I can read this piece aloud quite easily, but it's just a little dry. No surprises for the reader.
- Parts of your piece invite expressive oral reading (indicate); others read a bit awkward or choppy (indicate).
- The connections are there, but are not highly effective. It's not confusing to the reader where the writer is headed, but it comes across very plain.
- You used a lot of simple and compound sentences. Adding some complex sentences would help strengthen this piece for sentence fluency.

SENTENCE FLUENCY STEMS

If weak

- Can you think of a different way to begin some of your sentences? There's little to no variety, making it sound very repetitive.
- Every word is strung together in one endless sentence. Please go back and revise for variety in sentence length and sentence structure.
- As I read this paper aloud, it has little musical rhythm or flow because all the sentences are about the same length. Please go back and stretch and shorten some of the sentences you wrote.
- This (indicate) is a run-on sentence. If you try reading this aloud, you would gasp for air. Try breaking these words into several different sentences.
- Almost all of your sentences end in periods. Try mixing it up a bit by varying the sentence type (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative); this will help give some cadence to your paper.
- Use your eyes and ears as you write. Does your piece sound poetic or musical as you read it aloud? If you look at your writing, you can see that most of your sentences are about the same length.
- Fluent writing is free of awkward phrasing. Try revising these (indicate) odd word patterns that slow the reader's progress.
- Is this a sentence? This does not flow or read well. What do you think?
- As a reader, I had to hunt for clues to see how sentences interrelate through connecting words and phrases (such as however, therefore, naturally, after a while, on the other hand, etc.). This interrupted the rhythm of your piece.
- Too many connectives (and, and so, but then, because, then, etc.) or a lack of connectives make this portion of your piece sound unnatural.